

Scotland, Royal Burghs

6

Edinburgh, 1787.

# HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS

OF THE

## GOVERNMENT AND THE GRIEVANCES

OF THE

### ROYAL BOROUGHS OF SCOTLAND.

TRANSMITTED BY THE

COMMITTEES of the different BOROUGHS associated for  
the purpose of REFORM, or extracted from their  
CORRESPONDENCE with the COMMITTEE of DELE-  
GATES.

**T**HE Committee appointed by the Convention of Delegates  
from the Burgesses of the Royal Burghs of Scotland, as-  
sociated for the purpose of Reform, wrote a circular letter to  
the Committees of the different Burghs on the 4th of May 1785,  
desiring an authentic Copy of the Set or Constitution of their respec-  
tive Burghs, and also making the following requisition: ' If there  
' are usages different from the Sets, and of a pernicious tendency,  
' these must be instructed by parole evidence, or other competent  
' proof, in parliament. Upon this subject we wish you could furnish  
' us with a short historical account of the government of your bo-  
' roughs, for, five, ten, or fifteen years back, describing the mode of  
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administration adopted during such periods, and showing also how far the counsellors and magistrates were or were not connected with the respective boroughs, by trade, residence, property, or otherwise. This, we are well assured, would throw additional light on the abuses of the present systems, and greatly tend to facilitate their downfall in parliament.—These systems, we are thoroughly convinced, stand opposed on every side to the attacks of fair reasoning. Added to this, a short history of their practical and gross abuses could not fail to hasten their ruin. Evils merely theoretical may be overlooked or disregarded by many. But systems, whose inherent vices, and pernicious effects, have been ascertained by the invincible testimony of experience, which makes always a deep and lasting impression, cannot escape the attention, or avoid the correction of the legislature. We are, therefore, of opinion, that a historical sketch of the government of your boroughs for several years would be materially useful when the Reform is agitated in parliament. This information we entreat you will transmit to us without delay, so as we may reduce it into proper form before the meeting of next Convention. In the *next* place, we must take the liberty to remind you, that we formerly requested a statement of the amount of the revenues of your different boroughs, and any neutral boroughs near you. In describing in parliament the bad effects of the perpetual government of self-elected administrators of the affairs of boroughs, we need not tell you how much force may be added to the description, by showing the amount of the revenues under the management of such administrators; we must therefore again request you will lose no time in furnishing us with as accurate a statement as you can of the total amount of the revenues of your different boroughs, and any neutral boroughs in your neighbourhood."

In consequence of this letter, the following papers have been transmitted, which it is judged expedient to lay before the public in their original form. They are written by persons who actually felt the particular grievances of which they complain. If not always the most elegant, they will at least be found to contain the most lively and authentic representation that could be given, of the enormous abuses which at present prevail in the administration and government of boroughs.



UNIVERSITY



## I N V E R N E S S.

*Extract of a Letter from the Committee of Inverness, 13th October 1785.*

1mo, The number of souls in the town of Inverness are computed at 8000, and the number of burgeses and respectable inhabitants may be about 400; the remaining male inhabitants being journeymen, apprentices, labourers, or dependents.

2do, The town-council of this place is composed of 21 members, whereof they only change 5 annually, and these are brought in the succeeding year, if their conduct on former occasions merited the approbation of the party in power; and, if that is not the case, any person acting contrary to the ideas of the leading magistrate and his party, are turned off the council, never more to be on the list; and thus it happens that the magistrates of Inverness continue to elect their successors, and must do so forever, if an alteration of the present system is not obtained.

3tio, The revenues of the town of Inverness, dilapidate away within the last century, by the different leading magistrates, in favours of themselves and their adherents, for trifling feu-duties, not exceeding L. 20 per annum, now yield above L. 3000 Sterling. The revenue of the town is at present L. 500 Sterling a year, or thereby; a great part of which is expended in entertainments and pensions to the friends and adherents of the leader. *Within the last three years, Provost Phineas M'Intosh, under whose management, and that of his predecessor's friends and dependents, the borough has been for above 30 years, granted a charter, in his own favours, of the lands of Drumdivan and Aultnaskeach, lying contiguous to the town, for an annual feu-duty of L. 1 : 10 : 0 Sterling per annum, when the former rent of it was L. 12 Sterling, and would have yielded to the community double that sum from a good tenant, upon a short lease, without any outlay for improvement.*

4to, The manner of electing the town-council of this place is most absurd and ridiculous. On the Saturday previous to the election, the provost, four bailies, dean-of-guild, and treasurer, meet and determine unanimously for the persons to be brought on and to be turned off the council. The same persons meet on the Monday thereafter, when they agree in the same manner as to the persons to be chosen magistrates the next day. The dean-of-guild is elected by the town-council, and

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he names his own council, consisting of six-members, who are always previously approved of by the town-council, though there is no authority for this practice by the set of the borough; and, by these means, the members of the guildry corporation have no vote in the appointment of the persons who dispose of their funds at pleasure; nor are they ever called upon but to pay their quarter-dues. In this state, the magistracy of this place is an hereditary matter, transmitted by one man, in favour of his nearest connection, or adopted friend.

5th, The inhabitants of this place have much reason to complain of the exactions by their town-clerk. A gentleman connected with the persons in power, resident at Edinburgh, is appointed town-clerk, who appoints a depute, and these gentlemen have doubled their fees in every matter connected with their office within the last five years. And it often happens that neither they, nor any servant of theirs, can be found in town to conduct any part of the business; so that the inhabitants pay for two clerks, when in fact they have none.

Our neighbouring little borough, Fortrose, are much in the spirit of Reform, and wish to declare their sentiments; but are mostly poor people, and can get no person to head them. *By their last Michaelmas election, they are left with only one counsellor, and one bailie, resident in the borough. One of their bailies is provost of, and resides in Dingwall, being seven miles distant,*

## L A N A R K.

In obedience to your's of the 4th ult. we submit to your consideration a few facts, which will serve for the historical sketch you wanted of the grievances we are subjected to in consequence of our council being self-elected.

Although the council must consist of nine merchants, and eight tradesmen, yet the management of it has been assumed by a very small number. It often happens that nine of these seventeen join together, do all the business, and hold the other eight as mere cyphers. Again, five of those nine over-rule the remaining four, and hold them in equal contempt. Thus, these wheels within wheels are reduced to a very limited circumference, the first movement and chief direction of which has at times continued long in one family, being transmitted from father to son, as if by hereditary right. To make it easy to retain the power in a few hands, every art has been used to get men into office whose views and interest are the same, and who will not soon become jealous of one another. The nine merchants have often been chosen  
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from four families, (which indeed was the case last year), and the eight tradesmen as much connected with these as possible. Thus, a few families have shared among them the whole emoluments of the borough. Unfortunately for this place, these ruling junto's have at no time discovered either genius or inclination for manufactures or business of any kind; nay, it has been imagined that they have looked with a jealous eye at any person likely to succeed in this way, choosing rather to preside over a poor depopulated place, than to become persons of a second rank in an opulent city. The poverty and depopulation of this place is chiefly to be attributed to the insignificance and perverse humour of the leaders of council.

That this council hath at no time interfered for the interest of the burgesses, will best appear by inquiring a little into their management, which we shall shortly do in a few particulars.

The town-common, as pointed out by the charter, was large and valuable, and, in the plainest terms, granted by the crown to the community. However, the council have usurped the supreme direction. They have sold and feued it out, in the most private manner, to favourites, in direct opposition to law, and the inclination of the burgesses. The extensive, fertile, and valuable lands, that encircled the borough, are now alienated at a few fifty times below the present value. The privilege of the common, formerly of such use to the burgesses, is not now worth claiming. By a very ancient regulation, each burgess is allowed to send three cows to the moor: A cow, properly fed, is in this place a treasure. The medium value of a cow is calculated at L. 6 Sterling annually. The town-common was, without doubt, sufficiently plentiful to feed the cattle allowed to each burgess. The most early and most fertile lands in the neighbourhood belonged to it.

There used formerly to be numerous applications to council for the office of town-herd, when the dues for each cow was only half a merk Scots. These dues have been gradually advanced to two shillings Sterling; and, even at that price, it is difficult to get a herd. This is an evidence that there is not one-fourth part of the cattle sent at present that used formerly to go; and even this small number is half starved, there being only left a trifling part, in comparison of what it originally was. We shall give you a single specimen of the council's strange management of the public common, which will enable you to judge of the whole. A veteran commander of a gallant party of this self-electing society entered into tack with the council, about thirty years since, for a possession in the public common, which he accordingly occupied till within these nine or ten years, when finding it an unprofitable bar-

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gain, he began to wish it off his hand. He communicated his scheme to a few of his most trusty friends, who promised to stand by him upon this emergency, as they had done on many others. The council being then called, it was represented to them, that a part of the common being barren, and unfit for pasture, behoved to be planted with firs; but this could not be done to advantage till the above tack should be bought up. The council, being under direction, agreed to the plan, and ordered twenty years rent of the tack to be returned, as an equivalent, to the possessor, for giving up his bargain.

Thus, this practised leader was handsomely rewarded for giving up his very unprofitable bargain; after which, he admonished the council that a great many firs were already planted, and he thought more unnecessary. They agreed again; and the possession remains to this day in the state of nature.

Another thing the inhabitants loudly complain of. At the last two sets of the public mill, the articles were conceived by the junto of council so as to imply a total prohibition of a fair roup, and had the effect intended of debarring all, except the then possessor, who, however great a favourite, in no degree enjoyed the esteem or confidence of the thirl, whose sentiments of the man were well known, yet utterly despised by this junto.

Though the King's cess required from this borough is not thought heavy, yet, by the arbitrary manner it is laid upon the inhabitants, it becomes to them exceedingly galling. The ruling junto in council appoint a few of their number as stent-masters. These men, with little regard to the extent of possession, or rental, assess the inhabitants at random; and, however unequal this may be, a complaint from any of the burghesses has generally made it worse; it being idle to apply to the magistrates for redress, they having the appointing the stent-masters, who generally calculate it in such a manner as to have not a few pounds overplus, which is spent in eating and drinking.

It used to be the practice here, as in most boroughs, to roup all the public work belonging to the community, such as building and repairing houses, streets, planting, inclosing, &c. This has, within these ten years past, been totally given up; every piece of work has been execute by some or other member of council, or their retainers, to the contemptuous exclusion of all the other workmen.

We cannot omit to mention the abuse and misapplication of the public money: But this mystery of iniquity we are unable to unfold; an impenetrable veil is endeavoured to be thrown around the transactions of our rulers; and the management of the revenue is kept a deep secret. A burghess, stretching forth his hand to open these curtains,



tains, has always been held as impious and profane, and the minions of the junto mustered to keep him off, by dint of brow-beating and insult. But, however private the borough revenue may be kept, it is known to be considerable, and, by proper management, might be of great use to the inhabitants, it being their natural and unalienable right; of it, however, they are deprived, by means the most illegal and unjust. The leaders of council arrogate to themselves the sole direction of it. By them, it is lavished out in unnecessary feasts and entertainments, and squandered away in keeping together their friends, who, for their fidelity to them, must be rewarded at the public expence. The public funds are also exhausted in paying accounts of work done for the borough, produced by the supporters of the junto; for they only are employed. These accounts, you may believe, are passed without much scrutiny. In this manner is the revenue chiefly expended. A person living in this borough to a great age, and remaining in council many years, might be puzzled to adduce one instance of the revenue being applied to advantage, and for the benefit of the community. And, though the funds are in no respect applied for the service of the burgeses, yet the borough debt is accumulating in a rapid proportion. Within these twelve years it has increased above a thousand pounds Sterling. We might continue to enumerate particulars to a great length; but as, from what has been mentioned, you may form an idea of our situation, we shall not trouble you with any thing farther on this head.

Burgeses not joined with any incorporation are in number 100.

Incorporations 7, members belonging to them about 160.

Heritors not burgeses are 30, only 3 or 4 resident.

Inhabitants about 1400.

## P E R T H.

*Historical Account of the Government of the Borough of Perth for about forty years back.*

THE borough of Perth is governed by a town-council, consisting of fourteen guildrymen or merchants, and twelve craftsmen; seven of the latter are deacons; and, after being elected by the trades whom they represent, take their seats in council without leet or control. The other five of the twelve craftsmen are called trades counsellors, and are chosen

chosen from leets sent up to the council. The fourteen guild or merchant counsellors are *self-elected*, as appears by a set of the borough, whereof a regular extract is in the hands of the secretary to the committee of delegates. Each puts a guildryman of his *own* naming in leet with *himself*; and the council elect one of the two. That being the case, it is no difficult matter to say who will be elected. The counsellor has it in his power, even in the case of party-work or dislike, to ensure his re-election. He names, perhaps, a street-raker, or some low character, between whom and himself there is no alternative. Or if, at any time, a man in better station is put on the leet, it is without that person's knowledge; and is done because, perhaps, it is known he would not accept. In no instance is a council man, wishing to keep his seat, disappointed.

But, though what has been now stated is the farce acted in council on election-days, measures are taken, at a private meeting held for the purpose some days before, to render a disappointment absolutely impossible, while any regard to character remains. The mode followed is this: Eight guildrymen make a majority of the guild-counsellors; and always, as a new member is admitted, he is given to understand, and, some say, comes under a solemn engagement, that the minority, in private meetings, shall on all occasions join the majority, when a vote goes round in council. This is what is called in Perth the *beautiful order*; and, at private meetings, it does for this borough what the Lords of Articles did for the Scottish parliament, with this difference, that its resolutions cannot be disappointed.

The set of the borough continues to be the rule at this day in all matters of election or votes in council; and no wonder, as no mode could be better calculated to support a junto than it is. The counsellors are all merchants or craftsmen living in town; and there has been no instance, this age, of any person unconnected with the town, being in council. Indeed, it is no easy matter to get there; for, when any one pleases to retire, his son, or some other friend, succeeds him; and he again hands down the office to some of his relations in the same manner as he hands down his estate. It is no uncommon thing to find men grown old in council; and there is now a member who has been above fifty years there.

Having stated how the town-council of Perth is filled up, and the way the members hold their seats, it will not be improper to speak of the funds under their management. These are very considerable, and are known to exceed the sum of L. 3000 Sterling yearly. The exact sum, however, the guild-committee cannot specify; because none but the members of council, and the town-clerks, are allowed so much as  
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to see the rental. Applications have been made to the council for an authenticated rental ; but these applications, though couched in decent respectful language, and signed by a number of respectable citizens, have been treated with neglect and silence. A rental will be hereto subjoined, as collected from fundry of the town's tacksmen, &c.

But, great as the funds are, totally under the management of a *self-elected* council, there are others, not properly belonging to the community at large, of which the council also take the direction and management. The guild-corporation have about L. 600 Sterling *per annum*, and the hospital as much. Now, the town-council elect the dean of guild and counsellors out of their own number ; and these have the direction of the guildry funds : So that, in fact, it may be said the town-council manage the guildry funds.

The hospital, till of late years, was totally governed by the council ; not indeed *qua* counsellors, but from the influence they obtained by being so long in council. The ruling counsellors easily got themselves named elders ; and, by taking in low, mean, spiritless artificers, &c. they ruled in the kirk-session with as great a sway as in council itself. By these means they got the management of the hospital-funds, which, till these fifty or sixty years, were very great ; but now, by bad management, are reduced to the poultry income of five or six hundred a year.

It might be expected that, with so great a revenue, the council would have a rich treasury ; at least, that the managers of the borough must have done much for the *conveniency* of the inhabitants, and greatly beautified and ornamented the place. In place, however, of a treasury, the counsellors have found means to spend the yearly income, and to burden the community with a debt of between *eighteen and twenty thousand pounds Sterling*, all within these twenty or twenty-five years. They are daily going deeper ; and are ready to treat with a lender at any time ; and, if things go on thirty or forty years as they have done, the great revenue, it is feared, will not save the community from absolute bankruptcy.

And, as to the *conveniency* of the inhabitants, some few instances excepted, that seems never to have been thought of by the town-council. No town in Scotland had better opportunities of excellent water than this ; and yet none has worse water for family use. Even what the inhabitants have, was brought in, not by the funds of the community, but by voluntary subscription.

Again, this town has salmon-fishings belonging to the community, which yield above L. 700 Sterling yearly. It is natural to think, that our  
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kings, who were so liberal in their gifts to this borough, intended them for the good and conveniency of the inhabitants. In place of that, however, the fishings, contrary to the remonstrances of the inhabitants, are always set to merchants, who export the fish ; and it is out of *favour only* that the people in Perth *ever* taste salmon. Modes have been pointed out how this inconveniency might be remedied, without hurting the rental. The town have a variety of fishings ; and, by setting the *smallest* of these, with the burden of cutting and exposing so many fish daily at a certain hour, in case of that number being taken, the inhabitants would be well supplied, without hurting the community. The rulers, it is true, by their influence with the tacksmen, can at any time supply themselves ; and therefore they care not for the wants of their fellow-citizens.

The quartering of soldiers has been felt to be a dangerous engine in the hands of a self-elected council. The council names the quartermaster ; and, whether it proceeds from instructions, or from an influence of office, many of the inhabitants have been grievously oppressed. Such of the inhabitants as favoured not the views of council, have been always sure to meet with a heavy share ; while the whole council-men, and many of their friends and adherents, have been either constantly excheemed, or seldom felt the burden. Indeed it is a rule, that all counsellors, and their widows, are excheemed. The case of this town is exactly similar, in this respect, to the town of Aberdeen, as pointed out by a memorial on the subject, drawn by the spirited committee of that place.

The mode of levying the town-cesses has of a long time been complained of, without any prospect of redress. What is stented upon trade is assessed upon individuals by twelve assessors yearly, named by the rulers in council ; but the cess is left to the town-clerk, to collect in the way he thinks fit. The result is, that, though within these twenty years, the town is perhaps a fourth larger than it was, and near a third of the old houses new built, and the cess is demanded for every new house as it is built, yet the former cess on old houses is the same : So that there must be now collected more than was formerly, and much more than the town contributes to government. This is owing to the cess not being assessed in the way the rent is. But even the rent is not properly done ; for the council, or their clerk, name the assessors ; and they take care to name such only as will do as they are directed.

In managing any public work, little regard is paid to the funds of the community : The business is given to some adherent or friend ; and, what any prudent man would do for L. 100, will be found, in general,



general, to cost the town three times the sum. Many instances of this could be given, but one glaring case shall suffice.

By an act of James VI. the borough have right to a certain pontage at the bridge over Earn, with the burden of upholding that bridge. Some years ago, an arch of the bridge was thought insufficient, and was taken down. It was an arch not above thirty-feet wide; but the building of it cost the town considerably more than L. 3000 Sterling; although a complete new bridge, over the same river, about three miles above, was done by subscription for L. 500 Sterling. This was not all; for the county, before the arch was taken down, offered to take the burden upon them, in all time coming, on being allowed the pontage. The town's managers refused that; and they draw about L. 60 a year for it. If this was prudent management, the disinterested will judge!

The town-council have not only the absolute management of the funds, but the disposal of all places and offices within the town. The persons they appoint having no dependence upon the inhabitants at large, are often found to behave with all the insolence of office, without the possibility to check them.

*Rental of the town's yearly funds, as nearly as can be collected, without seeing the vouchers in the hands of the council.*

Salmon-fishings, at an average, for these twenty years	L. 700
Town-mills, at present set at L. 700, but averaged at	650
Waulk-mill, set for twenty years at	25
Town's wood yields sometimes L. 1000, but averaged at	700
Town's inches set at	100
Bridge of Tay port set at	70
South Inch ditto, set at L. 105, but averaged at	80
North port	30
High-street port	18
Anchorage dues, &c. presently L. 190, averaged	160
Flesh-market	70
Meal-market	40
Tay flats, sold within these twelve months at L. 560, and a	
feu of	14
Cortes Croft	14
Dead Land	9
Wilson's Yard	8

Carried over L. 2688

	Brought over	L. 2688
Feus of land within town		100
Seats in the three churches		300
The farm of Nether Tullylumb		70
The weigh-house, set to a friend at only		2
The entry of burgeses averaged at		30
Bridge of Earn		60
Sharp's yard		10
Provost Gray's yard		20
Mr Scott's house and yard		10
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Yearly amount of the community-funds	L. 3290	
Guildry funds about	500	
Hospital ditto	500	
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Total		L. 4290

N. B. It is believed the rental has not been less for these twenty years, taking one year with another.

In consequence of complaints from many of the boroughs, that they were not equally adjusted in the tax-roll, it was ordained by the convention holden at Edinburgh in the year 1691, that a visitation should be made over the whole royal boroughs in Scotland, and an exact account taken of their respective revenues, debts, and expences. The whole of these *States* were accordingly given in to the convention held at Dundee in the year 1692, and ordered to be recorded in a particular register, to prevent embezzlement in all times thereafter.

As we have been favoured with access to a copy of this register, (intended to have been published by Maitland, author of the *History of Edinburgh*, &c.) we shall subjoin to this account of Perth the following state of that borough in the year 1691.

*The state of Perth, the 21st August 1691, in respect to its Receipts and Disbursements.*

RECEIPTS.

	Scots money.
By the four ports and bridge of Erne	L. 2500 0 0
By the four mills	3300 0 0
By the weigh-house, Pynorie and packs, postmastership,	
cefs-boll, fish and flesh boards, and anchorage	800 0 0
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Carried over	L. 6600 0 0



	Scots money.		
Brought over	L. 6600	0	0
By the common moor		66	13 4
By the farm and teind bolls, twenty-four chalders, nine bolls, two firlots three pecks, at one hundred merks per chalder		1640	14 0
	L. 8307	7	4

## DISBURSEMENTS.

To the ministers stipend, money, and corn,	L. 1833	6	8
To the schoolmaster, ushers, and precentor	538	13	4
To interest for the town's debts	3274	0	6
To advocates, agents, town-clerks, fiscal, &c.	500	0	0
To the equie, borough dues, and commissioners to par- liament and boroughs,	800	0	0
To the town officers, drummer, and piper	400	0	0
To the public works	1400	0	0
To the magistrates expences	600	0	0
Sum total	L. 9346	0	6

The boroughs of regality and barony within the district of the town and county of Perth, are, viz. Abernethy, Dumblain, Logyrate, and Couper of Angus regalities; and Forgindenny, Douning, Achterarder, Dunkeld, and Bridge of Tay baronies.

No ships seem to have belonged to Perth at this time.

## D U M B A R T O N.

*Narrative of facts relative to the Burgh of Dumbarton.*

For more than half a century, the burgh of Dumbarton has been under the management of the family of Argyle; and its constitution is such, that this noble family having got into power, it has been found impossible to turn them out, or to rescue the burgh from that state of political slavery under which it has so long laboured.

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By the set or constitution of the burgh, the magistracy and council ought to consist of ten merchants and five tradesmen, the provost, two bailies, dean of guild, and treasurer, being merchants, and the ten counsellors, being merchants and tradesmen, equally. The mode of election is exactly on the footing of the act 1469. The old council chuse the new, and the new council chuse the magistrates from amongst their own number, so that they are wholly self-elected; and, as the set does not require any part to go out annually, or in any given time, they generally continue during all the days of their lives. Accordingly, the present provost has been constantly in office, as a magistrate or counsellor, near forty years; four of the counsellors have been in office near thirty years; and several of them from twelve to fifteen years.

Arbitrary and defective at best as the set of this burgh is, yet, to serve the views of the family who rule it, and that the council may be composed of persons friendly to their interests, a system has been introduced totally repugnant to the only salutary regulation that the set contains; for, instead of the magistracy and council being filled by merchants and tradesmen *within burgh*, persons have been elected without trade, property, or residence, and for no other reason than being adherents of the family of Argyle, they are supposed best qualified to enter into their political views. Hence this burgh, for many years, had a provost, who was commander in chief of the forces in Scotland; a bailie residing in the castle of Dumbarton, and holding the chief military command there; one counsellor, who was sheriff of Argyle; another, whose residence was mostly in the county of Kent; and a third, a merchant in Glasgow. At present, it is furnished with counsellors both from the east and from the west. The member of parliament for the county of Argyle, and who has not seen the burgh twice these five years, a writer to the signet, who never sees it but when a political errand brings him hither, a factor, in the island of Roseneath, and a gentleman in the neighbourhood, make *four* of the five *merchant* council. More than one of the remaining counsellors do receive pensions for their interest, and others of them are under peculiar obligations to their political leader.

Under rulers self-elected, many of them, having no connection with the burgh, either by trade, residence, or property, and who in fact have bartered its constitution, and its freedom, for their own sordid views, it is not at all surprising that the true interest of the burgh has been neglected, its revenues squandered or embezzled, and an enormous load of debt contracted.

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For these thirty years past, the annual revenue of the burgh has, on an average, amounted to L. 300. With this revenue much good might have been done, and many works of utility and ornament carried on. Objects of vast concern might have been accomplished; sands to a considerable extent saved off the river; commons improved, and extensive moors planted, to the great melioration of the property of the burgh; yet it is a lamentable truth, that, by the practices followed under the present political system, not only the annual revenue has been consumed in folly and dissipation, but debts contracted, amounting, at Candlemas last, to no less than L. 2341 Sterling.

To enumerate the many acts of malversation committed by the magistrates and counsellors of this burgh for these last twenty-five years, would fill a volume. In that period they have drunk, including interest on the sums so mispent, near to L. 2000 Sterling of the public revenue, which is equal almost to the debt of the town; so that, had the council acted with any common degree of prudence and oeconomy, no debt ought to have been incurred.

Within these late years, the magistrates and council were so infatuated as to elect the same person into the office of treasurer for *five successive years*; and, during all this time, they never thought of causing him account for his intrusions; but, at last, permitted him to elope, without any settlement, whereby nearly L. 300 Sterling was lost to the community.

In the last twenty years, many hundred honorary burgeses have been made, for no other reason that can be devised, than to afford the town-clerk a fee of 3 s. 6 d. for each ticket out of the revenue of the burgh; and it appears, from the accounts of the burgh now in Exchequer, that this officer has received, in about one year, no less a sum than L. 22 Sterling for these honorary tickets.—Indeed, the invention of the magistrates seems to have been on the rack to find out ways to consume the funds of the community. It is a common thing for them, at conferring the freedom of the town on a gentleman, to extend the like honour to his servant; and many a valet, footman, and chaise-driver, stand upon the roll of honorary burgeses of the burgh of Dumbarton. Such mal-administration, it is hoped, is rarely to be met with, though many instances, such as these, have distinguished the conduct of the rulers of this burgh for these last twenty-five years.

To remedy, in future, the evils before enumerated, and many others of equal magnitude, and to restore trade and prosperity to this burgh, and their ancient rights to the burgeses, no method occurs but a steady perseverance in following out the plan of Reform, now under the consideration of the royal burghs of Scotland; to which plan every burges of Dumbarton, not immediately connected with the present rulers, gives his hearty concurrence, and will support to a conclusion.

I R V I N E.

## I R V I N E.

Town-council consists of seventeen members, viz. fifteen merchants, and two trades.

None but indwelling burghesses, and indwelling heritors, were ever admitted as counsellors or magistrates, till about 26 years ago.—What gave rise to the alteration was shortly this.

The town-clerk of this burgh has been, time out of mind, elected annually. A party in council, at the period above quoted, though they had no fault to find with the then clerk, had a young friend of their own whom they wished to put into that office: Each had friends; the party for the young man prevailed, and, in their heat, expelled a number of the opposite party, and the old clerk.

In the contest about filling up the new council, some things were done which afforded ground for a process; and the old party did not fail to improve it. It was tried to reduce the election before the Court of Session, and to bring on a poll vote. The court gave decree in favour of the old party. An appeal to the House of Peers was the consequence; and, contrary to all expectation, the sentence of the Court of Session was reversed, and the new party confirmed.

Hitherto no foreign counsellor had ever been admitted: The new party, to gain strength, threw themselves under Alexander Earl of Eglinton; and, in a year or two thereafter, the said Earl was chosen a *merchant-counsellor* of the burgh of Irvine; which station he kept till his death. He was for six years provost of Irvine, by the unanimous suffrage of *his fellow counsellors*.

The year of the Earl's decease, 1769, or 1770, there happened another revolution in council. The party outed had the good will and countenance of all the burghesses. The ruling party, well knowing this, and determined to keep themselves in power, took an uncommon step. Instead of choosing indwelling burghesses, they set out to the neighbouring parishes, voted into council no fewer than five country gentlemen, and one nobleman, some of them at the distance of nine Scots miles from the burgh, others of them at the distance of four, three, and two Scots miles, all of them not only without the very parish, but also without property of any kind within the burgh, excepting the noble Earl, who has an old ruin, and one acre of land within the privileges of the burgh; and to these gentlemen and noblemen were the rights and privileges of indwelling burghesses transferred. One of these gentlemen is dead; a second went out of the council, from a conviction that it was iniquitous to sit there in the place of an indweller; the remainder, with the noble Earl, are, to this hour, members of council, and stiled merchant-counsellors.

The council of Irvine changes annually two merchants and the two trades. Thus thirteen may be said to remain for ever, as they always take in two silly persons to shift. It was never known till within these last eighteen years that any person was ever chosen a trades-counsellor, without being first a deacon of craft.



craft. Three instances have occurred within that period, where the junto, to secure themselves, took up tradesmen who had not arrived at that dignity, and moreover took up tradesmen as merchant counsellors, to secure themselves and these tradesmen, of so mean a rank, that one of them, for many years past, could not afford to keep either apprentice or journeyman, but drove the shuttle for the poorest subsistence; and, at this hour, there are two working tradesmen taken up as merchants to sit and vote with the noble Earl, and to secure all the party.

Within these thirty-six years the town's debt has nearly doubled: At this day it amounts to more than L. 4600, and, within the last eighteen years, it has increased from L. 1100 to L. 1300.

Town of Irvine's revenue arising from lands, feu-duty, and teinds, about L. 550.

Shore, two years ago, brought not a penny more than kept its works in repair; but, by a new management, it has brought L. 106 clear of all expence the preceding year, and this year promises to do as much.

N. B. This management was forced upon the magistrates by the burgeses.

Another income to the burgh of Irvine will very soon arise from a new coal-work, begun in the lands of the burgh, the express rent of which, the twelfth load, is to be paid into the hands of the burgh factor; and, from the amazing quantities of coals shipped off daily from the port of Irvine, there is reason to suppose the yearly rent may be rated at two or three hundred pounds a-year.

## D U N D E E.

### *Memorial and State of the Revenue of the Borough of Dundee.*

This borough has always been, as it now is, a place of extensive trade; it was also possessed of very considerable property in land. Its revenue consists of dues levied on trade, under the denomination of shore dues and petty customs, and rents of public warehouses, mills, fisheries, &c.

Had the town retained the property of their lands, the revenue would have been very great; but these, except an inconsiderable part, (which have been feued on very disadvantageous terms), were distributed among the friends of the men who then composed the town councils, many of them without the shadow of a remuneration, and others for such avowed causes as bore no proportion to the value of the property given away.

It was about the year 1698 that these abuses in the public business happened; and it appears the trades, at this period, had taken the alarm, and exerted themselves to bring the council to account; but, from a defect in the law, and the determined obstinacy of the council, their efforts proved ineffectual. This is the more to be regretted, as, had the town's accounts been then strictly examined,

and the delinquency of the council detected, the revenue of this borough would have been at least five times its present amount; but this not having happened, the whole mystery of iniquity remains involved in that obscurity which the actors in it meant it should, and the inhabitants have now the mortification to see some of the finest lands in the island, originally their property, possessed by men whose forefathers obtained them by corrupting their rulers.

It were endless to enumerate particularly the many instances of abuse which have happened in this borough in latter years; but these shall be particularly condescended on, if it is afterwards thought necessary. In general, we shall mention, that the town council, originally intrusted with a very large revenue in one of the richest boroughs of its size in this country, instead of applying the public money in promoting the trade, convenience, and ornament of the town, wasted it in rivetting themselves in power, and in serving the immediate purposes of themselves and friends.

Having exhausted the town's funds, it became a practice to borrow money, and which was continued while the town retained the least shadow of credit, until, about ten years ago, when the trades, without whose concurrence the council cannot borrow money, withheld joining their security further with the town council, and which had almost left the revenue in a state of bankruptcy.

Since that period, some of these abuses have been corrected, and the revenue greatly advanced, partly owing to those in office attending better to the town's business, but principally from the trade of the borough, and agriculture in the neighbourhood, having made rapid progress, by which many branches of the revenue have been much increased.

The magistrates of Dundee have generally resided within the borough; but as, in other boroughs, though those who have had the lead may have, on some occasions, been men of property, it has been an invariable custom to bring into council persons without property or connections, and of no long standing in the borough; and of these they have always stored themselves with a double supply, that such as go out in one year may be returned the next, while the leader or junto remain in office without controul.

The Dean of Guild is chosen by the town council, and is one of their number; the funds of the guildry are under their management: These are not applied to the purposes of the guildry, but borrowed by the town council, and thrown into the general mass. This is also the case with other funds appropriated for particular purposes. The following is a state of the town's revenue at Martinmas 1786.

Tonage,



Tonage, anchorage, and shore dues,	L. 486	0	0
Warehouse,	60	0	0
Petty customs and fairs,	246	0	0
Flesh-market,	60	0	0
Multure malt,	96	0	0
Flour mills,	91	0	0
Malt mill,	14	0	0
Salmon fishing,	15	0	0
Wood yards,	22	0	0
Stables and small houses,	7	0	0
Meadows,	8	0	0
Burgees-ships,	30	0	0
Fees and vicarage,	30	0	0
Ground annuals,	20	0	0
Rents of lands without the borough,	140	0	0
Two-pennies on the pint of ale,	300	0	0
Dung of the streets,	168	0	0
	<hr/>		
	L. 1793	0	0

The town's debts amount to about L. 8000 Sterling. The greater part is mortified money at four *per cent.* the interest of which, and ordinary expences of the borough, are the town's debursments.

The funds of the guildry, if well managed, might have been very great. At present, they only amount to L. 80 *per annum*; and, although it is considered solely as a charitable fund, there is not annually paid out of that fund in charity more than from L. 12 to L. 14.

The funds of an hospital, founded for the benefit of poor freemen, are also under the management of the council;—the annual amount is L. 320.

The funds of the kirk-fabric, arising from seat rents, &c. and burdened by part of ministers stipends, repairs of the churches, &c. are also under their direction, the annual receipt whereof is about L. 400. The town council have under their direction an annual receipt of about L. 2600.

## W I G T O W N.

The set of the borough of Wigtown, as recorded in the books of convention, is as follows viz. That the council consists of one provost, two bailies, fifteen counsellors, and one clerk, the treasurer being always one of the said counsellors, and that the said magistrates do not continue in their office of magistracy more than two years together; and that, at every annual election, they put off three of their old council, and brings on three new ones in their stead, that the whole

whole inhabitants may be better acquainted with, and understand the burgh's affairs; and, in case of any of the said magistrates or council should depart this mortal life, their place is vacant till Michaelmas thereafter, which is the ordinary time of their election; and this is the true sett of this borough.

*First.* True it is, and of verity, that the general part of the above sett has been violated for many years past. The provost has been in office for three years together, and at same time at a considerable distance, and sometimes abroad; the two bailies-revenue-officers, and have been often obliged to leave the town at one time, and in office three years together. As to the councillors, instead of putting off three, they only put off one, and very seldom put on an inhabitant, but a non-residenter; so that our council is composed of a nobleman and his servants, with country gentlemen and revenue officers, with a few dependent inhabitants, not exceeding above one third of their number, the rest residing at London, Edinburgh, Dumfries, Newfoundland, and our chief magistrate is with the navy in the West Indies. Some of them have been elected and re-elected without being qualified to the borough; and, instead of letting the inhabitants know the affairs of the borough, they endeavour to do every thing in a private manner. Hence, see the dismal effects of the borough being governed by strangers and aliens, having wantonly thrown away the largest quantity of the borough land, which at this day pays annually L. 400 Sterling, out of which they only receive L. 16 Sterling of feu-duty from a leading nobleman of their number. Also, about thirty years ago, the customs and danery were set yearly from L. 40 to L. 50 Sterling, and only gives from L. 4 to L. 9 Sterling for these many years past, by reason of the leading men of the council being graziers and drovers, who are as anxious to evade the ordinary custom as the most trifling dealer, who had never been sworn to maintain the rights of the borough.

*Secondly.* The arbitrary and unparalleled partiality of repairing and dividing the church, without consulting the freeholders, who were the principal heritors, is clearly shown by two of the freeholders, who protested against the division, and carried it before the Court of Session, who reduced the division; which action cost the town L. 100 Sterling, when it only cost the protestors L. 13:10:0.

*Thirdly.* That, some years ago, to please a certain counsellor, a new town-house and a good steeple was thrown down, to remove it from before his house. The reason given, was to build a sufficient prison; but the inhabitants are put to more expence with watching and warding this present house, than they were with the former. The removal of said house cost the town about L. 900 Sterling, which obliged them to borrow L. 450 Sterling of the poor's money, and mortgage a part of the town land for 27 years, to pay the other part. At the same time, to oblige the builder of said house, they exchanged away a piece of land, rented at L. 3 Sterling yearly, for a rock, which is at this day let for about the trifling sum of seven or eight shillings yearly. The inhabitants have been



been obliged to mount guard day and night ever since this house was built, when either debtor or criminal was confined in it.

*Fourth*, It is customary that the council meet eight days before the 29th September, and appoint the ordinary day for their election. This they accordingly did in the year 1781, but to serve a political scheme of a leading nobleman of their number, the two bailies and clerk did erase said minute, and appointed another day, when Andrew Cowand and Peter M'Guffock protested against said election, and carried it before the Court of Session, *where it was found the inhabitants were not legal complainers*; which cost the protestors and those that adhered to them above L. 100 Sterling. And ever since, *the junto have laid their hand very heavy upon us with every public burthen that they had in their power, such as the keeping of soldiers in our houses, and have overlooked those who did not join against their irregular proceeding in the management of the borough.*

*Fifth*, According to custom, our council met eight days before the 29th September 1785, and as our provost and a respectable counsellor was deceased, the residing part of the council in the borough resolved to chuse two counsellors in town, and at the same time to confer the honour of provost on one of their residing counsellors; but, as soon as that leading nobleman came to town on the day of election, he caused himself to be elected provost, and named a Mr Busby in Dumfries, and Mr James Nith his factor at Galloway-house, the new counsellors, and the residents of the present junto themselves, grievously as they oppress us, were obliged to submit.

*Sixth*, We have great reason to complain of our magistrates, that they will not restrict the fees of their clerk, or give us any relief from his exactions. At present when a man disposes of a small subject of L. 15. Sterling value, the disposition and infestment costs from L. 3 to L. 3 : 10 Sterling; and on that account very few in town stands properly secured in their property.

Much more might be said, but we will at present conclude.

## W H I T E H O R N.

As to the government of this borough, it has been under the direction of the Galloway family for upwards of forty years, till the year 1780, when, by deaths and other causes, there was a breach made in that family's firmest friends. A party of the residing counsellors being ill pleased with the conduct of Lord Galloway to themselves, and to the inhabitants of the town in general, embraced the opportunity, and formed an independent party, who governed the borough till the year 1784, when Lord Galloway and his friends, by corrupting some, and carrying away others of the council, immediately before the Michaelmas election, some by force, and some by wiles, they turned out all who stood firm for independence, and formed a council of their friends and dependants, as follows:

F

Hugh

Hugh Steuart, Esq; of Tonderghie, provost. *A country gentleman.*

Robert Hathorn,  
Anthony Donnan. } *bailies residing in the town*

#### COUNSELLORS.

*The Earl of Galloway,*

The Honourable Keith Stewart of Glaserton.

Robert Hathorn Steuart of Physgill, Esq;

John Hathorn of Castlewig, Esq;

Alexander M'Credie, tide-waiter in Garlieston.

Robert Vance Agnew of Shuchan, Esq;

John Bushby writer in Dumfries,

*John Nish servant to Lord Galloway,*

*James Nish factor to ditto,*

Anthony M'Lurg farmer at Isle.

Anthony Broadfoot,

James M'Millan,

Alexander M'Comb,

John M'Candlish,

William Hannah.

} *non-residing heritors.*

} *neither residing in the borough  
nor heritors.*

} *all residing heritors, but tenants and dependants of  
the Earl of Galloway.*

By the above you will see that there is only the two bailies, and five of our council, that resides within the borough, and even these few under the influence of Lord Galloway.

The principal revenue of this borough arises from customs, or shore-dues, collected from all goods shipped or landed upon a certain district of shore.

Between thirty and forty years ago, two men, who at that time were the principal traders in grain and kelp, which is the chief export from this place, and were likewise the principal importers of other goods to this place, being at that time the two leading men in the town council, did, by an act of council, lower the custom on kelp one-half, and on grain one-fourth: And, by the same act, all burghesses was to have one-third of this reduced duty discounted to them. By this means, any person who deals to any extent, purchases a freedom in the borough for two or three pounds, which, by virtue of the above act, they save in a year or two. *One of the above men is yet in council.*

There is a piece of ground upon the shore, belonging to the borough, on a part of which a gentleman in the neighbourhood, about twelve years ago, built a street of houses. When he began to build, a protest was taken by the council; but he being a man of interest, made friends with one part, and overawed the rest; many of them being country gentlemen, and of consequence the ground was lost; and he is just now a counsellor himself.

About the same time, the charters of this burgh being in Latin, was by a part of the council taken out of the charter chest, in order to get them translated into English,



English, when, one of them being the bounding charter, was either lost or, what is more probable, wilfully destroyed. Upon this, a village in the neighbourhood, *belonging to one of the council*, which used to pay custom to this borough, immediately refused payment of any custom. To save appearances, a process was raised by the borough, to recover the usual customs; but the whole council being creatures of him to whom the village belongs, the affair was so conducted as to bring about a decision that no custom was due. Some of the council openly supported those who refused to pay. This is a loss of ten or fifteen pounds Sterling yearly to the borough. The council are now about this present time selling and setting the town's property to one another, *by private bargain*, which formerly always used to be done by public roup.

### P I T T E N W E E M.

In the year 1740, the town got into debt for meal. One of the inhabitants was imprisoned for this debt. Sir Harry Erskine made them a considerable present, which so far reduced it. In the year 1765, it stood at the sum of L. 370; and this day it stands at L. 350. The town's yearly revenue is from L. 130 to L. 135. It pays to the minister and schoolmaster about L. 25 *per annum*. In the course of twenty years they have reduced the town's debt L. 20. They have upheld a mill and school-house; and they must have eat, drunk, or divided L. 2000.

For, allowing the revenue L. 130 <i>per annum</i> , in twenty years is	L. 2600
The minister and schoolmaster L. 25 <i>per annum</i> , is	L. 300
Suppose laid out for school-house and mill	300
	<hr/> 600
	<hr/> L. 2000

This sum, no man can say where a shilling of it has been disposed of. Perhaps it may be of consequence to the Reform, were these magistrates brought before the Court of Session, to account for the expenditure of this money, at the expence of all the friends of Reform. We shall gladly contribute our mite, and give our mandate to pursue it.

In the 1765, the town was broke; in 1767 or 1768 it was restored, by warrant from the Privy Council. The new election was made by poll of the burgeses. All heritable, trafficking, resident burgeses, were allowed to elect and be elected; all honorary and non-resident burgeses, town-pensioners, were discharged to elect or to be elected. For one year only was this warrant regarded. The second year was a new scene, when honorary non-resident burgeses were elected, of all descriptions; and have re-elected themselves every year, from that day to this. We have Sir John Anstruther, two of his sons, Philip and John, his brother-in-law Provost Fall of Dunbar; these are standing troops for counsellors

counsellors in Pittenweem, Wester and Easter Anstruther, and Kilkrenny, all at the same time, and will continue as long as they live. Sir John has a subtle fellow of a factor, his name is Gavin Hogg. This fellow was a bailie in Pittenweem and Easter Anstruther three years ago, and acted in that capacity in both boroughs same year. He is now chief magistrate here ; but, at same time, he is commander in chief of the whole four boroughs. A nod of his head, a pop on the nose with his finger, or a blink of his eye, commands obedience from every one of them. They are all Sir John's creatures, by bits of land, offices about his coal and salt : And even revenue-offices does not deter them here to be bailies and counsellors, in the face of a late act of parliament to the contrary.

Our council consists of twenty-four in all, four of them bailies. The oldest of them is this same

Hogg, }  
John Douglas landwaiter, } bailies.

Alexander Aitchison, coal-grieve, treasurer.

Sir John Anstruther.

Philip Anstruther, Esq;

John Anstruther, Esq;

Robert Fall of Dunbar.

Philip Brown, clerk of Sir John's coal and salt-work.

John Baines, }  
William Tosh, } workers of Sir John's lime-stone quarry.

John Chisholm shore-master, paid by Sir John L. 10 *per annum*.

Andrew Scott, a farmer of Sir John's land.

James Brown, and James Dewar, colliers to Sir John.

I might mention more dependents ; but the above can divide the council ; which gives Hogg the casting vote ; and that settles the point : So that you see the borough is entirely at Sir John's disposal, and that the inhabitants, except the few that he thinks proper to trust, have no more to say than if they were at Rome.

The town has a very extensive common, which used to be grafs for the burgeses cows. The magistrates took it from them, and let it for a corn-farm, in order to pay off the town's debt ; and you see what a great length they have come with it. The rent of that land ought to have been no otherwise applied, and would surely be a heavy cut upon them in the event of a process ; but, the people being poor, they have nothing to fear ; and consequently the inhabitants are despised : And Sir John sends his son to parliament, to represent himself and servants. The borough he does not represent. He would not get a vote of fifty, was the election to be made by resident trafficking burgeses.

I dare venture to affirm, that, exclusive of the council, there is not four men in all this borough that would sign against the Reform ; and, as to the respectability of the people that has signed the petition for it, there is not a merchant, nor  
any



any person that carries on trade of any kind in the borough but what has signed it. As to the mode of our elections at present, and since the year 1768: The first vote of the council is, 'Continue or alter the council.' If the vote carries 'Continue,' as it has always done since 1768, except three or four years that it was carried to open, on purpose to vote off the council a few men that became suspected not to be so friendly to the ruling junto. We had for three years a William Young a messenger our chief magistrate, although he was so infirm as not to be able to go down his own stair, nor attend either election or council; and, by calling for our council-book, it will appear that he stands in that capacity, without accepting of his office, nor his name at a single act of sederunt of council, notwithstanding he was always elected again into the office. They continue, as by the set, to elect their bailies and treasurer annually, though they always elect the same men again; for, during the above period, there has been only three bailies voted off; death voted off all the rest.

There are about 200 families in the town; the resident burgessees about 120. Heritors, who are not burgessees, about twenty. No guildry or incorporations.

### E L G I N.

In answer to your query, respecting the common good of the borough, we are to remark, that, notwithstanding the greatest part of the lands that belonged to it having, from bad management, been sold, and otherwise alienated, there does still remain a yearly income of about two hundred pounds Sterling; one hundred of which is sufficient for defraying every public expence; consequently there ought to be a saving of another hundred; notwithstanding which, it is but too true that the town is considerably in debt.

We next proceed to lay before you, Gentlemen, a short view of our set, and a few of the innumerable instances of its being violated in the electing of counsellors.

By the set, the number of counsellors is seventeen, whereof fourteen are guild, and the remaining three trades counsellors; these last consisting of two deacons, and a convener. The number of guild counsellors put off the council every year is three, and of trades two; and an equal number of each kind is elected anew, to make up the number seventeen. Our office-bearers are, a provost, four bailies, a dean of guild, treasurer, and convener; and the set of the borough expressly bears, that none can be elected office-bearers, or even counsellors, except *resident* burgessees of the borough, and *actual* traders and trafficking merchants, bearing Scot and lot, and all portable charges: Nevertheless, nothing has been more common than for our council juntas to elect, in order to serve their own little ends, people utterly unqualified, as being neither *residents*, *traders*, nor trafficking merchants within the borough. The following instances,

stances, that have occurred within these last eight or ten years, will set this fact beyond a possibility of doubt.

1<sup>mo</sup>, The late Mr Alexander Duff writer in Elgin, neither a trader nor trafficking merchant, not bearing Scot nor lot, was first elected a counsellor, and afterwards made a bailie, merely to serve political purposes; as was, 2<sup>do</sup>, Bailie Peter May, late factor to the Earl of Findlater, by profession a planer and farmer, neither a trader nor trafficking merchant, and, from his necessary avocation as a planer, seldom resident in the town. 3<sup>th</sup>, William Brody, Esq; of Windyhills, residing for most part in London, and, when in the north of Scotland, on his estate in the country, is neither a trader nor trafficking merchant. 4<sup>th</sup>, Mr George Fenton, a writer in Elgin, and neither trafficking merchant nor trader, in any sense of the words, nor paying Scot or lot, or any public burden, is, along with the gentlemen immediately above mentioned, a member of our present council.

We shall, with all possible despatch, have our petition signed by such of the burghesses, heritors, and other inhabitants of the borough, as are friendly to the Reform; when, we hope, it will appear that, both in point of numbers and respectability, they have greatly the advantage of those that are inimical to this Bill, which we do earnestly wish to succeed.

The solemn declaration of the burghesses to meet, by their delegates, annually at Edinburgh, in the month of August, to deliberate on the means of redress, until they obtain the object of Reform, does show a spirit, firmness, and perseverance, that, in the end, cannot fail of success.

Guildry 50, heritors 184; and they are all burghesses, except about half a dozen, of no consequence. Incorporations 6 in number; and the people, in whole, connected with them, about 200. Inhabitants computed, at least, at 3000.

## C U P A R.

The Committee appointed to return an answer to your letter, thought it proper, in the first place, to demand an authenticated extract from the town-clerk, both of the set of the borough, and also of the extent and amount of its annual public revenue, with a particular statement of its various articles and branches, and to require this, under form of instrument, if refused. This demand, though not absolutely refused when made to the clerk, yet was entertained by him with such an air of indifference, as discovered his reluctance and aversion to grant it. On a subsequent day, soon after, one of our number having occasionally met with the magistrates and the clerk, and, in that interview, the conversation having turned on the demand made by the committee, the clerk said, that he could not see the set of the borough inserted in the council-books. To this it was answered, that, in fact, it was inserted in their books, and extracts thereof



thereof had been given, when those who had occasion for demanded them. As to the extract of the revenue of borough, and a statement of its various articles and branches, the magistrates, with warmth, declared, that their clerk should not furnish it under the enormous expence, at least, of five pounds Sterling.

This declaration was politically intended, no doubt, to intimidate and discourage our constituents to insist on the demand; and, indeed, it has had the intended effect on them. We are sorry that it is therefore not in our power to furnish you with this material information, and shall only observe, that, as to the extent of the annual revenue, though we cannot condescend on the precise thing, yet we can safely affirm it to be above four hundred pounds Sterling.

As to the magistrates and counsellors, how far they were or were not connected with our borough, we have to answer, that, for these twenty years past, we had no magistrates elected but such as were resident in the borough; but, as to counsellors, there are some of them who have neither trade, property, nor residence; others of them have indeed property, but do not reside, and never attend town-council, but on some particular occasions, or at the annual election of magistrates.

As to the practical and gross abuses of the public revenue, these have been too frequent in this borough. To enumerate them would be a tedious and difficult task.

Some instances, however, we will condescend on. A late magistrate of the borough, who had obtained a feu-tack from the council, of a considerable number of acres of their muir-land, about twenty-four years ago, the feu-duty annually of which did not exceed four pounds four shillings Sterling money; yet, for ten years successively from his entry thereto, he had never paid any part of the feu-duty. The salvo and expedient he fell upon to cancel the debt, was, to address the council with specious pretences for his being excused and relieved. His petition, though warmly opposed by a respectable number of the counsellors, and with every solid, convincing, and cogent argument, the desire of the said petition was notwithstanding granted. The feu-tack he was still vested with; and, within these two years preceding, was transferred to another, who gave four hundred guineas for it. It is certain that the annual revenue of this borough is such, that, if managed with candour and probity, it would have raised itself superior to every embarrassment, and put us in a capacity of doing many good things, and of great importance to the community. The want of this embarrassed the borough so far, of late years, that the managers and junto in council were alarmed at it themselves, and were induced thereby to resolve to set the most of their property of land in feu-tack. Accordingly, did so sell, among others, the mill, and farm of Ruffel-mill, to a gentleman in the neighbourhood, and for which they received L. 850 Sterling. This relieved them under their then embarrassments, but did not extinguish the whole of their debts.

The

The leading junto, a few months ago, found means to obtain an act of council, allowing above forty pounds Sterling, in a present, to their clerk, out of the town's revenue, for his alledged expence of a process he thought proper to bring before the Court of Session for his own behoof.

Guildry L. 130. Heritors, who are not burgeses, about 8. Incorporations 8; and the members connected with them are about 250. Inhabitants about 2000.

## B R E C H I N.

By the set of the borough, it is provided that the town-council shall consist of thirteen members, eleven of which are guildrymen, and two tradesmen; one of these tradesmen is the deacon-convener, but the other is positively elected by the council. And even the deacon-convener, after being elected by the trades, must submit to a form of an election by the council before he be admitted one of their body. Further, the magistrates are elected only from the eleven guildrymen, as none of the two trades-counsellors can be put on the list when a magistrate is to be chosen. They are expressly debarred from this privilege. From these circumstances it is plain that the corporations have no voice in council. 2<sup>dly</sup>, The counsellors can and do elect themselves. Without enumerating them here, it will be evident that many real and oppressive grievances must arise from such a government in this borough. In any community, it must both occasion and protect abuses of power. Here all the borough revenue is in the management of a set of men over whom the burgeses can have no controul. Their income, and their property, is disposed of, not only without their concurrence, but without their advice. To instance one particular, the collector of cess is chosen by the council. The cess payable by the borough does not exceed L. 5 per month. Eight months of this is L. 40 *per annum*. Now, upwards of L. 60 is levied on the inhabitants. To whom is this overplus accounted for? to the council, who, as already said, will not account to the burgeses for this, nor for any thing else; nor inform them, either of the amount of the revenue, or expenditure of the borough.

## K I R K C U D B R I G H T.

By the set of this burgh, the magistrates and council are bound to put out two or three counsellors annually, and take in as many new ones in their room: But this part of the set has not been observed; for, except at some particular times, when party-work run high, the council was continued without variation. For  
fundry



fundry years past, there were three of the counsellors who resided in England, and, at this moment, two of them reside there.

As to the management of the revenues, the committee are totally in the dark. The accounts of the burgh have been demanded by the burgessees, and refused; and two of the burgessees have made an application to Exchequer for exhibition, which is still in dependence.

## D U N B A R.

The set is very contracted and despotic in its principles: For,

*1mo*, From the day of election not being fixed to a particular one on which the election should always be held, and that the magistrates are at liberty, at any time in three weeks running, to fix it at forty-eight hours warning, it is in their power, studying the circumstances of counsellors, old or new, who may be obnoxious to them, to disappoint them from being at the election.

*2do*, From the new counsellors being leetered, elected, and permitted to vote all at once, and without having the opportunity of a moment's fore-knowledge of their chance of being elected, ground is given for a chance that the greatest part, if not the whole, of those new counsellors, may often be out of the way when sent for by the council the moment after the election, and thereby disappointed of their votes for the magistrates, although it is highly expedient, and seems clearly to be the intention, that they should always exercise that right to vote for them.

To show what ground this has given to flagrant abuse of power, it is only necessary to mention, that the magistrates of this burgh, for these sixty years past, have managed matters so as to hold their offices for life: The consequences whereof, from the use they have made of their power, has been very destructive; for no person who has ever yet essayed to trade to any extent during the period before mentioned, in which this political power has been enhanced, but has gone in a state of bankruptcy to his grave, let his plan of family oeconomy and prudence in the management of business be as commendable as possible. The consequence and credit resulting from the disposal of the political interest of the town, and the resources afforded by the management of the funds, having always supported those in power against the others out of it, maugre every effort in the latter to remove the former, or to establish a proper counterpoise.

In the burgh of Dunbar, and the village of Belhaven, about half a mile to the westward of it, but which is within the liberties and royalty of the burgh, there were found to be 1992 inhabitants above eight years old in the month of April 1782, when the list was taken up; and, it is believed, the number is not since decreased. There are just 100 resident burgessees, whereof 50 are heritors in the burgh; and it is thought proper to mention, that at present there are in Dunbar

above 200 persons qualified to be counsellors, and persons in proportion qualified for holding the offices of the magistracy. No guildry or incorporations.

*Account of the common good or patrimony of the burgh of Dunbar for the year from Martinmas 1784 to Martinmas 1785.*

The rent of the town's mills at Westbarns,	-	L.	83	17	9
Ditto of the town's customs and impost,	-		90	0	0
Ditto of the ballast in the harbour,	-		4	2	6
Teind of the white fish and lobsters,	-		15	0	0
Rent of the driven sea-ware for manure from the sea-shore in the royalty,	-		20	0	0
Ditto of the cutting ware for kelp from the rocks in the royalty, including the driven ware at Belhaven water-mouth, also belonging to the town,	-		21	10	0
Ditto of the town's lands called West Common,	-		16	0	0
Ditto of its lands called Forrest's Lands,	-		16	0	0
Ditto of its lands called Salt Greens,	-		5	0	0
Ditto of its lands called the Latch,	-		20	0	0
Ditto of its lands called Broxburn Gates,	-		2	0	0
Few-duty of Treasurer Johnston's dwelling-house, garden, and lands adjacent, called Mill Quarter, feued to him,	-		3	12	0
The rent of the town's lands called Winterfield Gates,	-		3	0	0
Rent of the town's houses called Sisters Girnells, and cellars kept in the town's own hand, but rated at	-		1	12	2
Duty of lobsters brought into the harbour and exported,	-		13	0	0
Rent of the dung of the streets,	-		40	0	0
Entry-money of burgeses at an average,	-		7	0	0
Stallengers fees averaged at	-		3	0	0
Borough mail and feu-duties	-		2	5	0
Dry multure for Sir Peter Warrender's lands of Baverage and Broom park,	-		1	2	2
Eighty merks payable yearly by the proprietor of Lochend out of the community teinds, and which is given by the town to the kirk-session of Dunbar to purchase the communion-elements,	-		4	8	10 $\frac{2}{3}$
Dues of the town's bells for burials,	-		1	0	0
Duty on ale by act of parliament, after deducting collectors salaries,	-		165	0	0
Teind of herrings averaged at	-		7	0	0
Rent of the stilliard,	-		8	0	0
		L.	553	10	5 $\frac{2}{3}$

N. B.



*N. B. Besides the above sum, the magistrates and council have been wont, for these some years past, to lay on from L. 36 to L. 40 Sterling yearly of cess beyond the sum they pay to government.*

From Martinmas 1736 to Martinmas 1752, the rent of the town's mills gradually rose from 1330 to 1790 merks Scots. Besides the mills at West-barns, the town had another mill at Belhaven, which grinded the malt, and greatest part of the humel corn, belonging to the burgh and village of Belhaven, which is a part of it. In the year 1743, a proper flour-mill with French stones, and boulting-mill, was erected at West-barns; and, towards the end of the 1752, these mills at West-barns were improved by the town at a great expence.

In the beginning of the 1753, an overture was made in council for taking into consideration, whether Belhaven-mill should be longer employed for the grinding of corns or not; and, in the mean time, the lands belonging to it kept for the maintenance of the mill horse, and miller's cow, were feued off to the treasurer, as mentioned in the foregoing state. Some weeks before Martinmas 1753, and before the overture before mentioned, as to Belhaven-mill, was determined on, it was resolved in council, that the mills at West-barns so improved, should be set in tack for twelve years from Martinmas 1753. The act of council to this purpose bears twelve years; but that word is wrote upon an erasement, and on a space between the foregoing and succeeding words, so little that no person could think it had been left blank for a word of such length. The roup took place accordingly. The mills at West-barns were set for L. 83 : 17 : 9 Sterling, being L. 15 Sterling below what they and Belhaven-mill together had set for for the foregoing year. The person who took them reported at next council, that he had done it for the provost, and then, and not till then, the overture of Belhaven-mill was determined; for it was then resolved, that this mill should not be employed for the grinding of grain during the said set to the provost of West-barn's mills, so they had then for L. 83 : 17 : 9 Sterling what then brought L. 98 Sterling.

After possessing on this right for four years, the provost presented a petition to the council, setting forth his having commenced a flour-manufactory; and that, for the better enabling them to go through with it, some improvements and alterations behoved to be made on the mills, which they could not make without a prolongation of their right of possession, which they thereby craved. The council (composed chiefly of the menial servants of the tacksman, whose family have monopolized the civil and political power of this town to themselves for these 50 years past), at once, and without taking one moment to deliberate on the matter, granted him a tack on the same terms as he then possessed, for three nineteen years, with a breach to him at the end of every seven years of the two last nineteens; whereas the town is bound for the whole time.

The debt of Dunbar, which, at the commencement of the dilapidation of the mills in the year 1753, did not amount to L. 400 Sterling, has now come up to  
near

near L. 3000, notwithstanding of the great revenue before mentioned of the duty on ale, and large subscriptions raised, from time to time, to defray the expence of any heavy works that have occurred.

*Discharge or Expenditure of the Common Good of Dunbar.*

Yearly salaries to the town's servants in the following offices, viz.

Clerk, procurator-fiscal, grammar, English, and mathematical schoolmasters; town-officers, bell-man, armourer, council-house, and church seat keeper, &c.	L.	70	0	0
Minister's stipend,		3	5	11
Feu-duties of the town's mills, and Arch-priestry and Saul-priestry teinds,		1	6	5
Surplus teinds of Forrest's lands,		0	15	6 $\frac{1}{2}$
Cefs of ditto,		0	7	5
Town's <i>aqua</i> ,		0	18	0
Missive dues,		5	7	11
Assessors and commissioners allowance, and clerks fees to the boroughs,		2	15	0

N. B. The cefs is not here charged, as it is not taken into the charge before written of the revenue. It is at present, and has been for this some time past, about L. 43 Sterling as charged by government: But the council thought proper to lay L. 90 Sterling on the inhabitants for it, whereof only L. 16 Sterling on property, although the town has about 60 acres of borough land, besides the whole tenements in itself and Belhaven. The worst tenement pays as much as the best. Every tenement and every acre of land pays just tenpence *per annum* of cefs.

Town's annual proportion of expence of vagrant poor, averaged at

6 10 0

N. B. The other expenditures of the town are upon upholding the pier and harbour, and the tolbooth, and other houses (being the schoolmaster's) of the town, keeping the streets in repair, and the town's reservoir, wells, and water pipes, averaged at

70 0 0

The water was lately brought in, and all the streets new paved.

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L. 161 6 2 $\frac{1}{2}$

Revenue,



Revenue,	L. 553	10	5
Yearly expenditure,	161	6	2

Surplus revenue, and yet L. 3000 of debt has been contracted, L. 392 4 3

### D U M F R I E S.

1. The examinable persons, from seven years of age and upwards, may be computed at about 5000.
2. The heads of families, at about 850.
3. The heads of families of the seven incorporated trades, at about 450.
4. The merchants, brewers, writers, surgeons, and others following some branch of business, and not members of any of the incorporated trades, at about 250.
5. Persons not concerned in business, at about 150.
6. Persons possessed of real property, at about 160, exclusive of tradesmen: And,
7. Tradesmen, possessed of real property, at about 50.

The numbers who have already avowedly declared for the reformation, amount to above 360, and more are yet expected; so that, in reality, more than one half of the inhabitants may be said to wish for it; for, as to the incorporated trades, they are already as constitutionally represented by their deacons constantly in council as they can desire. The merchant part of the council are self-elected; but it may be observed of the incorporated trades, that they at this day are, and all along from the time of their erections have been, in the full exercise and enjoyment of their original political privileges, which, it is believed, is not the case with many of the incorporated trades in other royal boroughs; and the committee believe it may be ascribed to this circumstance, that they are at liberty to make use of fire-arms, in a body, as often as they please, in consequence of a present of a silver-gun from one of the King's of Scotland, which they shoot for every third or fourth year, and sometimes oftener; and being thus in a manner trained to the use of arms, no attempts would be ever thought of, as to invading their political privileges and independence.

With regard to the common good and annual revenue of the borough; the common good consists of about 60 acres of land, yet unfold and unfeued. Feudal duties payable out of teinds feued—a kiln, and a set of water-mills, for flour, barley, and meal, and a waulk-mill, and oak bark-mill, and a covered meal-market, flesh-market, salt-market, and weigh-house, council-chamber, court-house, and school-house, and certain duties and customs, which in all may be stated at about L. 1500 Sterling. The extent of land originally granted to this borough was considerable; but the greatest part of it has been, at different times, feued

out for a very trifling feu-duty ; and, whilst the greatest part of the land is thus gone from the common good of the borough, the debts contracted, and still owing, are pretty considerable.

With regard to the administration of the revenue, the committee cannot charge those presently in office with either neglect or embezzlement ; and they believe the town council is now in use of causing their treasurer and chamberlain make up and render annually an account of the income and expenditure, though they do not render any such, or indeed any account to the Exchequer, or to the community, nor has any such account been demanded of them.

## D I N G W A L L.

Council 15. The old council choose the new ; only, by the set, the counsellors must all reside within the town. From among the new counsellors, the old counsellors choose the provost, bailies, dean of guild, and treasurer. A list of the names of some of the present counsellors of Dingwall will show how the set of the town has been departed from in practice.—George M'Kenzie younger of Pitlundy, residing two miles out of town, is youngest bailie ; dean of guild Colin M'Kenzie of Mountgerald, residing three miles out of town ; Patrick Reid, factor in Tulloch, treasurer, residing about a mile out of town ; John M'Kenzie of Avoth, three miles from town ; Captain James Monro of Jeannich, twelve miles from town ; Sir George Monro of Pontzfield, sixteen miles from town ; Duncan Monro of Culcairn, fourteen miles from town ; John Grant, factor on Fairtoth, three miles from town ; the Honourable David Ross of Ankerville, one of the judges of the Court of Session ; Duncan Davidson of Tulloch, residing in London ; Sir Hector Monro of Navaar, sometimes in London, and sometimes in India.

Guildry in 1725, by roll, consisted of 10 persons. At Martinmas 1743, they consisted of 5 persons. At present, there is here no distinction between guild-brethren and other inhabitants. Heritors in this borough are generally burges-  
ses. Incorporations, properly none at all in this borough. The whole trades have lately joined in one body, to raise a fund to support their poor. This association is called the society of the *United Trades of Dingwall* ; and every heritor, burges, and inhabitant, with a few exceptions, are members of it. Inhabitants, about 500. But the house-keepers, paying public burdens, amount only to about 88 persons.

B A N F F.



## B A N I F F.

Council, by the present set, consists of 17, two of whom from the trades. The old council chooses the new; but, by the set, *four* only of the old can be re-elected; and the whole must, by the set, be substantial burghesses, merchants, or traffickers, bearing all charges: But the set has, in practice, been departed from in both these particulars. Eight, instead of four, of the old council have been continued; and, instead of resident burghesses, the councils, at least a majority of them, have been composed of country gentlemen, writers, lawyers, and officers of the army.

Guildry, about 60. Heritors resident, and not guild-brethren, about 15. Incorporations six. The resident members of the whole about 84. Inhabitants, between 2300 and 3000. If the proposed reform should take place, the number of electors in Banff will be upwards of 100, besides the trades.

## I N V E R U R Y.

Council. The council consists at present, and has consisted for many years past, of nine persons. These nine persons annually elect themselves, or others, so that some of them have been about 36 years in office. The provost at present resides six miles from town; and one of the counsellors 14 miles. A majority of this self-elected council elects the member of parliament; and sometimes that majority consists entirely of *non-residenters*; which was the case in the last parliamentary election. Guildry, 52 in number. Heritors: There are no heritors who are not burghesses. Incorporations, none. Inhabitants, about 350.

## S A N Q U H A R.

Council. The council consists of 17, who, by the set, should be residenters; but, in fact, seven of them have resided at Edinburgh, and elsewhere in the country, very distant from the town. The council, annually, elects itself or others. The present junto has done so constantly for about 11 or 12 years. Guildry 28. Incorporations five; and members connected with them, about 70. Heritors, who are not burghesses, 12. Inhabitants, about 190 males.

## ANSTRU-

## ANSTRUTHER EASTER.

**Council.** By the set of this borough, the whole council should be composed of burgessees, being merchants, and other tradesmen; but, for many years past, four or five members of the council have resided out of town, and are members of other councils 40 miles distant. The council consists of three bailies, a treasurer, and 15 counsellors. The bailies and council, annually, elect four new counsellors, in place of four old counsellors who go out. The three bailies and treasurer are annually elected by a pole of the whole burgessees, from leets given by the old bailies and old treasurer. Guildry, none. Heritors, who are not burgessees, about six. Incorporations, none. Inhabitants, paying public burdens, about 105. The committee do not mention the number of other inhabitants.

## C R A I L.

For fifty years past the set of the borough has been totally disregarded. Magistrates have been continued for 40 years; and the counsellors are taken in with no view but to serve the ruling party. No guildry; nor heritors nor burgessees. Incorporations, seven in number. The members are about 84. Inhabitants, that are burgessees, and mostly heritors, are 85; and seafaring men 40.

## S T R A N R A E R.

There has not been a provost in office residing in this borough for many years past; no, not in the memory of the oldest inhabitant here.

Our provosts have commonly been persons whose interest and residence were at 40 or 50 miles distance; and, at times, a person whose residence was in a foreign country. Query, How can one not personally present take the oath *de fidei*? This mode of conduct has not only been a great loss to the distressed inhabitants of this borough, but to the very magistrates themselves, who were not perfectly knowing in the law, or in the liberties and properties of royal boroughs; all of which have proven destructive both to pursuer and defender, viz. the inhabitants of this borough; all which we impute mostly to the want of a supreme magistrate residing in the borough, who, no doubt, may be found, but not to the satisfaction of all presently concerned.

Our magistrates, &c. are chosen annually, and at the instigation of a certain nobleman in this neighbourhood. If they answer his designs, they are continued, or re-elected, from father to son, for the space of twenty years, to our own knowledge.

Also,



Also, the public funds are exhausted in a manner not known to the inhabitants, who, notwithstanding, are liable to pay additional taxes, and towns debts, at the will of the magistrates.

As to our minister, we think it does not suit him well to be a counsellor. He is the first of his coat that ever we understood was a counsellor; but, indeed, him who made him our minister makes him a counsellor. Also, we think he is too heavy metal for the rest of his brethren in the council, being so much in the favours of the nobleman, our patron; and, farther, we think it is an irreparable loss to himself, as well as a disadvantage to his parish. Our town's counsellors are all tenants to the forementioned nobleman. It may be of service to themselves; but we are of opinion it is pernicious to the public management of our borough affairs; and, through the power of a certain party having the management of the public affairs of this borough without controul, they have utterly neglected and passed over each liberty and property, except those which suit their own advantage. As to our town clerks; the first we shall mention, being this nobleman's factor, lived ten miles from the borough. He was employed as clerk to the borough for the space of thirty years, and, at his decease, or soon after, was succeeded by the present factor, who lives three miles distant from the borough, and has just now substituted one under him. It is our opinion, that the town's clerk should be a residenter in town, chosen annually, and continued according to his behaviour.

We farther complain, that our tax-masters are chosen by the magistracy. They are men of their own faction; and they continue them for a number of years running, without giving the other burgesses their regular turn of that important office, which concerns the whole inhabitants.

## L O C H M A B E N.

The very improvident manner in which our public funds have been managed for these last 26 years, and the very wretched state of the police of our town, determined us to grasp at the first opportunity to attempt to avail ourselves of our privileges, and to look a little into the situation of our own affairs. It was our first business at the beginning of this reform, to lay down our system on general principles; and we hope to retain such a disposition till the attainment of that very important object.

There is no particular authenticated set of our borough which we can learn of; but, by charter from King James VI. 24th July, 1612, the right of election appears to have been in the burgesses and inhabitants. Our present number of counsellors does now, and has for a number of years back, consisted of fifteen. The following state, taken from the old council books, will show how far the council consisted of persons connected with the town by residence, property, &c. Since the year 1718, till anno 1760, it appears, that one third of our council

cil has consisted of noblemen and gentlemen in the country, holding, of course, the different offices, *such as*, Sir William Johnston of Westerhall, William Marquis of Annandale, James Lord Johnston, George Kennedy of Healbeaths, Gavin Johnstone of Elshiesheid's, Mr John Henderson of Broadholm, Robert Henderson of Cleugh-heads, all of which were proprietors in the town, but did not keep their residence therein. The other persons after named held different offices in the borough during the above period, but were neither proprietors nor residents, viz. Mr James Johnston in Westerhall, Mr Robert Foord chamberlain to the Marquis of Annandale, William Johnstone of Corhead, Lord John Hope, Sir Thomas Kirkpatrick, Charles Erskine Lord Tinwald, Mr William Kirkpatrick brother to Sir Thomas, Sir Robert Lowrie, Mr James Maxwell chamberlain to the late Duke of Queensberry, William Johnston of Lockerby, Sir Alexander Jardine, Sir William Maxwell of Springkell, Mr William Herries of Haldykes. And, from 1760, to 1765, it appears, that Mr James Maxwell at Ross, Mr Carruthers of Dormont, factors to the late Duke of Queensberry, and Mr George Clark, late Sir George Clark, and the late Mr George Muir writer to the signet, and both residing in Edinburgh, are the only persons during that period that bore offices in the council, and were unconnected by property or residence. Since *anno* 1765, to the present time, the council has mostly consisted of persons in the town; but, it will be observed, that the gentlemen last mentioned were always brought in under the influence of other great men; and, even now, the present set of our counsellors, who (by the bye) are sure most of them to be people of the lowest rank, and meanest capacities, in the town, self-elected persons, who are still under the whip of his Grace the Duke of Queensberry, and other great men, whereby, in express contradiction to the interests of the community, or the public police of the town, nothing but jundos are kept up. "*Divided, joined, the same eternal cause.*"

The amount of the annual revenue of this town is at present about L. 81 : 10 : 0 Sterling. Prior to the year 1760, the revenue *per annum* was only about L. 15 Sterling; and all the burdens the town was under at that period *was only about L. 50 Sterling*. About the year 1770, the revenue increased to about L. 54 *per annum*, when it is reported their debts also increased to about L. 300 Sterling. *Anno* 1778, the revenues amounted to the present income; and, what is exceedingly alarming, since that period, and particularly within these last five years, *the debts of this community have swelled to upwards of L. 1300 Sterling*. How our present set of counsellors can account for this it is impossible to learn. We have more than once, within these two years, made a requisition to know, to no purpose. To no public good has that money been applied; on the contrary, we believe we can with confidence affirm it has been prostituted to the worst of purposes, in drinking, and being more than once compelled, by law, to pay large sums, in consequence of their mal-administration in office. If matters are permitted to continue in the present course of management, additional taxes must be levied



levied for instant supply; and the property of the burgessees must, in the end, be affected for the deficiencies.

If the present plan shall take place, we believe we may have betwixt 95 and 110 qualified voters, including the present council. The inhabitants are about 751; incorporations, five; members of them, exclusive of journeymen, &c. is about 83. We are certain that every person in the town is a friend to the reform, except 14 of the present council, and about four or five small tradesmen, who are tools of the present set; and who, though they say they would rejoice to see a reform take place, yet, so much are they the hobby horses of the office bearers, that they dare not avow their sentiments above board. This account of our friends and enemies we are the more certain of, as we took care to certify our approbation and willingness by signing a paper to that purpose.

The revenues of our borough are on the verge of bankruptcy. Added to all this, our present set of magistracy and counsellors, who we lament, are most of them of the lowest rank in town, seem to glory at its impending ruin; and, as some of the leaders of them most stoically express, "*Let's have our time, we value not what become of it afterwards*;" a prospect we look at with heart-felt sorrow. They do not stop here, however, for "*ruin us all*," is their theme.

In the 1782, our present council, (for few alterations have been made since), thought proper to allocate to themselves, and a few of their favourites, the remains of an extensive common, at an under feu-rent, to the exclusion of almost the whole heritors besides. This transaction we thought proper to bring under review of the Court of Session, by reduction. It is still undetermined; though the only prospect they had was, to weary us out of it, by fighting us with preliminaries, out of the public funds, and draining us, out of our private pockets.

Our expence has been indeed great; more than we were well able to bear; but the justness of our cause prompts us to persevere; and we have now the hopes of a speedy and favourable decision.

We forgot to mention, that, eight months ago, we sent our member of parliament a copy of our petition, signed, and a list of adherers, &c.; and wrote him most explicitly, and at some length. Civility gave us reason to expect an answer; but as yet we have had none.

NOTE.—From the proceedings in the before mentioned process, it appears that the lands which the town-council had feued out among themselves, for a yearly feu-duty of L. 16 Sterling, contained 185 acres, and were worth at least four times that sum. The prosecutors judicially offered, that, if the lands should be set up to roup for a nineteen years lease, they would begin the roup with an offer of L. 48 Sterling of yearly rent. The town-council defend themselves by saying, that some of the prosecutors, when in office many years ago, had feued out to themselves a considerable portion of the property of the town for a feu

duty equally inadequate. No decision has yet been pronounced. In this case, the prosecutors do not rest their title solely on their right as private burgesses, but on the right of servitude, by which the proprietor of each house in the town is entitled to send a certain number of cattle to the common, which will be greatly impaired by the late alienation.

We are certain that every person in the town is a friend to the town, except it of the present council, and about four or five small tradesmen who are took of the present set, and who, though they say they would rejoice to see a reform take place, yet to mind are the body holders of the office. It is a reform that they dare not avow their sentiments above board. This account of our friends and enemies we are the more certain of, as we took care to certify

all the members of our borough, and will give a list of them. Added to all this, our present set of magistracy and do not believe who we have sent, and

some of the best men in the town seem to be very anxious to support the town, and we have no doubt that we shall be able to get a proper set of men to fill the office.

Our present set of magistracy, however, for "rain or shine," is a set of men who do not believe who we have sent, and we have no doubt that we shall be able to get a proper set of men to fill the office.

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NOTE.—From the proceedings in 1802, it appears that the kinds which the town-council had among themselves for a year or two of 1802, contained 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100.



